

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ABU DH 01322 261025Z

11

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 IO-14 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 EB-11 COME-00 FEA-02 AID-20

INT-08 CIEP-03 DRC-01 /177 W
----- 023193

R 260924Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2091

INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY UVANAMA

AMEMBASSY SANAA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABU DHABI 1322

KUWAIT PASS DOHA AND MUSCAT

E.O. 11562: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TC

SUBJECT: UAE INTERNAL AFFAIRS

REF: ABU DHABI 1319

1. DURING PAST YEAR MAHDI TAJIR HAS MOVED SWIFTLY AND WITH CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS TO BRING HIMSELF INTO FAVOR WITH SHAIKH ZAYID AS ONE OF HIS KEY POLITICAL AND FINANCIAL ADVISORS. AT SAME TIME, HE HAS TRIED TO PRESERVE HIS OLD CONNECTION WITH SHAIKH RASHID, THUS FAR, TO ALL APPEARANCES, SUCCESSFULLY. TAJIR MAY HIMSELF HAVE DECIDED THAT DUBAI'S DAYS AS INDEPENDENT MERCANTILE FIEFDOM ARE NUMBERED, AND THAT FUTURE LIES WITH ZAYID IN ABU DHABI. TAJIR IS INTERESTING BLEND OF MERCANTILE RAPACITY AND POLITICAL

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PAGE 02 ABU DH 01322 261025Z

GOOD SENSE. HIS POLITICAL FARSIGHTEDNESS IS UNDOUBTEDLY

SHARPENED BY AWARENESS THAT IF THINGS GO WRONG IN UAE
IT WILL BE THE MAHDI TAJIRS AS WELL AS THE SHAIKHS WHO ARE
STRUNG UP.

2. TAJIR'S REMARKS TO US IN REFTTEL MAY WELL ACCURATELY
REFLECT STRATEGY WHICH HE HAS RECOMMENDED TO SHAIKH ZAYID,
BUT IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE SHAIKH OPTS FOR
TAJIR'S SLEDGE-HAMMER APPROACH AT THIS TIME. WE WOULD
GUESS THAT CABINET CHANGE IS PROBABLY IN WORKS FOR AFTER
RAMADAN, BUT THIS OF COURSE IS NOT AT HEART OF FEDERAL-
SHAIKHDOM RELATIONSHIP. TAMPERING WITH SHAIKH RASHID'S
OIL MONEY VEYV MUCH IS, HOWEVER. QUESTION IS WHETHER ZAYID
NOW FEELS HE IS IN STRONG ENOUGH POSITION TO CHALLENGE
NORTHERN SHAIKHS. IS POSSIBILITY OF RASHID AND QAWASIM
SHAIKHS BREAKING OUT OF UAE AND FORMING CONFEDERATION
OF THEIR OWN WHICH PRESERVES THEIR INDEPENDENCE A TOTALLY
EMPTY THREAT? WE DO NOT THINK SHAIKH ZAYID CAN ASSUME IT
IS, UNLESS HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN GETTING SAUDI ASSURANCES (OR
CONCEIVABLY IRANIAN) THAT THEY WOULD INTERVEN
TO PREVENT SUCH BREAKAWAY, AND WE QUESTION WHETHER SAUDIS
WOULD GO THIS FAR. WHILE ZAYID HAS IN ADDF PREPONDERANT
MILITARY STRENGTH COMPARED TO TOY-SOLDIER OUTFITS OTHER
SHAIKHS ARE MAINTAINING, IT IS NOT VERY EFFECTIVE MILI-
TARILY AND ITS ABILITY TO SUPPRESS DETERMINED RESISTANCE
IN OTHER SHAIKHDOMS CR QUESTIONABLE. ZAYID MAY POSSESS MOST
OF THE CARDS, BUT NOT QUITE ALL OF THEM, AS TAJIR WOULD HAVE
US THINK, AND ZAYID STILL NEEDS TO PLAY THEM ACCURATELY.

3. WHILE ZAYID MAY WELL BE CONSIDERING ALL-OUT POWER MOVE
AGAINST OTHER SHAIKHS, WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK HE IS ALSO
WEIGHING CAREFULLY MERITS OF MORE GRADUALISTIC APPROACH,
LEAVING BULK OF OIL MONEY IN HANDS OF SHAIKHDOMS FOR TIME
BEING, BUT ASKING FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEDERAL BUDGET FROM
THEM (WHICH THEY HAVE SO FAR BEEN UNWILLING TO MAKE) AND
PERHAPS ALSO INSISTING THAT TIME HAS COME TO DISBAND INDI-
VIDUAL EMIRATE MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES AND REPLACE THEM
WITH FEDERAL FORCES IN BOTH FIELDS THAT HAVE REAL TEETH IN
THEM. WITH POSSIBILITY OF SHOWDOWN WITH ZAYID LURKING
BACKGROUND, AND OF ANY SAUDI SUPPORT HAVING RECEDED WITH
ABU DHABI-SAUDI SETTLEMENT, SHAIKHS MAY WELL NOW BE PREPARED
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PAGE 03 ABU DH 01322 261025Z

TO AGREE TO THIS MUCH.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, ARMED FORCES, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ABUDH01322
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740271-0553
From: ABU DHABI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740913/aaaaakpa.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: ABU DHABI 1319
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <27 JUN 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <12 MAR 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: UAE INTERNAL AFFAIRS
TAGS: PGOV, TC, (TAJIR, MAHDI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005